

2015 Preservation Award for Outstanding Preservation Rehabilitation Project

Havre Historic Post Office

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In 2011, when eye doctors Marc Whitacre and Erica Farmer moved to Havre with their three children, they could have bought a conventional house. But to Marc and Erica, two experienced preservationists, the conventional approach didn't appeal to their sense of history and adventure. They became aware of the Havre Historic Post Office, unoccupied for the better part of two years. The more they learned about the 35,000 square foot building, the more the challenge of saving one of Havre's most important and threatened buildings interested them.

Built in 1932, the Havre Historic Post Office, which originally also served as the federal court house, is a three-story building of reinforced concrete and structural steel sheathed in red brick and limestone in a Beaux Arts Style. Imposing Neo-classical Corinthian columns support the prominent portico entry.

When Marc and Erica assumed ownership of the post office in late 2011, the building had suffered extreme water and ice damage, resulting in failure of both

the steam heating and plumbing systems. Ceiling and wall finishes had also become detached, and the floor finishes were badly buckled. Fortunately, due to the robust construction of the building by the Federal government, these many failures did not threaten the building's underlying "bones" and structural integrity.

Thanks to a National Park Service Save-America's -Treasures grant obtained in partnership with Opportunity Link, along with significant personal investment and sweat equity, Marc and Erica committed to rehabbing this Havre landmark once again. They re-plumbed the building and restored the failed finishes from floor to ceiling. They purchased a bucket truck to assist in their restoration. They learned about the inner workings of steam boiler systems and elevators to make necessary repairs to them. They tracked down and re-acquired the building's scavenged architectural features. And when they were done they re-opened the Havre Historic Post Office as commercial office space, a banquet facility, and as their own remarkable home residence.

While all of us here today love historic architecture, the fortunate among us won't ever have that love tested by embracing such a monumental, multi-year, largely do-it-yourself project. Fortunately however, for the Havre Historic Post Office and Havre's downtown, Marc and Erica have not only shown an appreciation for the

building's splendid architecture, but also an unconditional love for the building and its historical significance.

For these reasons, I ask you to join me in recognizing Marc Whitacre and Erica Farmer with the 2015 State Historic Preservation Award for Outstanding Preservation Rehabilitation Project.